

by focusing on historical figures who were models of compassion and service. Students in the class decided two years ago to focus on the land mine issue, which had been championed by Britain's Princess Diana before her 1998 death.

About two dozen students from the class formed the Land Mine Awareness Club, designed a multimedia presentation on the world land mine problem, and chose the village of Podzvizd in northwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina as a "sister city." The students began taking their presentation to churches, civic groups and other organizations throughout Bergen County, explaining the dangers of land mines and appealing for donations to help remove land mines in Podzvizd.

The students soon formed a non-profit organization, Global Care Unlimited Inc., in order to collect donations on behalf of Podzvizd. In addition to the presentations by the club, the school's 800 students began a campaign of selling paper butterflies—representative of the deadly "butterfly" model of land mine—that raised \$6,000. To date, the students have raised a total of approximately \$15,000 in donations. Last week, Global Care signed an agreement with the U.S. State Department, which will match the private donations dollar for dollar under its Global Humanitarian Demining Program. In all, \$30,000 is now available to remove hundreds of mines from a field near a school in Podzvizd.

Global Care Unlimited declares part of its goal to be "to develop student leadership potential in the areas of organization, communication and technology in the service of humanitarian ideals." The students participating in this project have, in fact, learned how to establish a formal, non-profit organization, have learned communication skills by working with the local media and technological skills in putting together the multimedia presentation used in their fund-raising efforts.

Special recognition must go to Mr. Hyman, a teacher who has made a difference not only in the lives of his own students but for the residents of Podzvizd as well. These students clearly took to heart the lessons they learned in this class and put them to use—in my mind, they have become "heroes of conscience" themselves.

Mr. Speaker, land mines are horrible enough when used during time of war by soldiers of one army against those of another. But land mines are unlike other weapons that observe a cease-fire when the war ends. Instead, they lie dormant, their locations often forgotten and difficult to find even if records are available. Civilians return to areas that were once battlefields and become victims of land mines even years after a conflict has ended. Approximately 110 million live land mines are estimated to be buried around the world today and one blows up every 22 seconds. Of those injured, 90 percent are civilians—more than one-third of them children. In nations such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, thousands of children with missing limbs are living evidence of the threat posed by land mines. And thousands of others have died as a result of the mines.

That is why I wrote to President Clinton last year, urging him to join the world effort led by Canada to ban anti-personnel land mines. In addition, I have co-sponsored the Land Mine Elimination Act, which would prohibit federal funds from being spent to deploy new anti-per-

sonnel land mines. A total of 156 nations support a complete ban of land mines, as do international leaders such as General Norman Schwarzkopf, Pope John Paul II and Bishop Desmond Tutu. I will continue to work hard to achieve the goal of ridding the globe of this man-made menace. This horror cannot be allowed to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in congratulating these young people on the magnanimous humanitarian effort. We can all learn from the example offered by these youth. If I may quote from the Book of Isaiah, ". . . and a little child shall lead them."

#### VETERANS' COMPENSATION EQUITY ACT OF 2001

**HON. LANE EVANS**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2001*

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing H.R. 609, the "Veterans' Compensation Equity Act of 2001". This legislation will provide more equitable treatment to approximately 150,000 older veterans who receive service-connected disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs and who are also eligible to receive retirement pay based upon their military service.

Under current law, the amount of military retirement pay received by a military retiree is reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the amount of VA service-connected disability compensation the military retiree receives. This reduction in military retirement pay when the military retiree is in receipt of service-connected disability compensation is intended to prevent dual compensation. The notion of dual compensation is simply erroneous. Service-connected disability benefits are paid to compensate a veteran for an injury or illness incurred or aggravated during military service. Retirement benefits are paid to military retirees who have spent at least 20 years of their lives serving our country as members of the Armed Forces. These two programs—military retirement pay and service-connected disability compensation—are completely different programs with entirely different purposes. Payments made by these programs are not and should not be considered duplicative.

The current treatment of military retirees who have service-connected disabilities is simply inequitable. A veteran receiving service-connected disability compensation could become eligible for civil service retirement based on his or her subsequent work as a civilian employee of the federal government. This individual, unlike the military retiree, can receive the full amount of both of the retirement benefit which has been earned and the service-connected disability compensation for which he or she may be eligible.

The "Veterans' Compensation Equity Act of 2001" will reduce and then eliminate the offset in military retirement benefits for veterans who are entitled to both military retirement pay and service-connected compensation benefits. Under this bill the offset will be completely eliminated when the retiree reaches age 65.

In many cases, retired military personnel are fortunate enough to have retired from military service unscathed. These military retirees are

not eligible to receive VA compensation due to illnesses or injuries incurred or aggravated during their military careers. In addition to receiving military retirement pay they are able to earn additional income through non-military employment and thereby accrue Social Security or other retirement income benefits.

Military retirees who were not so fortunate, are required to forfeit a portion or all of their military retirement pay in order to receive service-connected compensation benefits due to illnesses or injuries which were incurred or aggravated during their military careers. Before we consider tax relief for our Nation's wealthiest citizens, we should allow military retirees to receive the full amount of the retirement benefits they have earned through many years of devoted military service and compensation for illnesses or injuries which were incurred or aggravated during their military careers. These veterans, as a result of their service-connected medical conditions, face diminished employment possibilities and therefore a diminished ability to earn additional income through civilian employment. They may completely lose the opportunity to accrue Social Security or other retirement income benefits.

In general, Social Security disability benefits received by retirees are offset by monies received under state Worker's Compensation and similar public disability laws. However, the Social Security statute provides that this offset ends when the worker attains 65 years of age. Furthermore, while recipients of Social Security benefits who earn income have their Social Security benefits reduced as a result of their earnings, this offset is eliminated at retirement age (currently 65).

While all veterans who are subject to the concurrent receipt offset are unfairly penalized, my bill would begin to rectify the injustice which falls most heavily on our older veterans. This bill will promote fairness and equity between military retirees and Social Security retirees by eliminating the offset at age 65.

Military retirees who have given so much to the service of our country and suffered disease or disabilities as a direct result of their military service do not deserve to be impoverished in their older years by the concurrent receipt penalty.

I commend Mr. Bilirakis, an original cosponsor of this bill, for his longstanding efforts to address the problems our military retirees experience due to the statutory prohibition on concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan effort to promote fairness for our Nation's older military retirees.

#### AMERICAN HEART MONTH

**HON. DAVID E. PRICE**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 14, 2001*

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I want to join my colleagues in recognizing February as American Heart Month. I commend the American Heart Association and other organizations for their efforts to raise awareness of heart disease. Their work is essential to reducing the physical, emotional, and economic burden of heart disease on the American public.